

Before I begin, I would like to thank you again for the experience I had to come and share my ideas and experiences with you. It was my experience that the teachers who were present today all felt about the same way and I agreed with the things that were shared. I could touch on many of these things, but I felt it better to just choose one or two from each section.

Describe the elements that contribute to high student achievement.

I feel the biggest factor in student achievement is the teacher. If teachers are supported to the greatest ability they can be by their administrators, and invest all possible resources to them, we in turn will have high achieving students. I want to make it clear, when I say invest in our teachers, that does not always mean a pay raise. Investing in teachers can mean supporting them, listening to them, trusting them to know what it is like to be in the classroom, believing in them, giving teachers a little latitude to teach with their own style, helping to give more preparation time needed to enhance and create materials for new programs so we can teach to the best of our abilities, and provide for them to become better teachers through professional development.

What is my biggest challenge?

The biggest challenge I see is classroom size. I am a teacher who loves to know everything about each student. Unfortunately, I can't spend the individual time that I believe those kids need when there are too many students and not enough time in a day. I give as much one-on-one attention to my students each day and when you add 6 more students to a room it means that much less time spent per student. Many would say there isn't a difference from a few more students, but I truly believe those people are not physically in the classroom trying to give each student the time deserved. When I look at guided reading groups and math groups adding even 4 or 5 more students means a whole extra group to teach, meaning less time with the other groups to work. It also means more prep time. For math groups I teach each group their own lesson because it is geared to what each group needs. Adding a group means adding another lesson plan. So when I have a classroom of 30 first graders student achievement is not as great as the years when I have 22 first graders, mostly due to time constraints.

What can the Legislature do or refrain from doing to promote student learning?

The legislature can take the time to listen to the teachers, and thank you so much for doing that today. By opening the conversation with educators, asking them questions, and truly wanting to find out what is happening in the classroom, teachers will feel supported and make a better effort to improve in all areas of their work. Again, thank you for that opportunity to come and share with you.

I feel the legislature should refrain from changing programs too quickly. It was said in the meeting that without change we will fall behind. I agree with that statement, I believe change is good. However, I think we should adjust over time and not completely replace or start new programs all at once. It takes time for teachers to learn and adapt to a new curriculum or program. I feel I become a better teacher as I learn new ways to teach. It can be overwhelming when that change is expected so quickly, especially with no professional support. If you would like to more information on what a dedicated teacher does to prepare for a new program, please email me and I will let you know the amount of personal funds and personal time I spend each time this happens to become an expert in the program.

Committee Questions:

Rep. Marie H. Poulson asked a question on the lines of the fact that there are always and will always be money constraints, so what would be my number one thing to spend money on in education?

Lowering classroom sizes would be my first choice, for reasons I have shared above. A strong second would be to find ways to give more teacher professional development. I become an expert in the new curriculum and/or new programs we are given because I am willing and able to use my personal time. However, I know there are many teachers who are unable to spend more time than they are contracted to work but are still required to learn everything. If we were willing to support our teachers and give all of them the opportunity to grow professionally I think we could better serve our students.

Rep. Carol Spackman Moss asked a question regarding standardized testing. What tests are required to give, which of those should be eliminated, and which should we keep.

This is a hard one for me to answer, because I can only answer for the grade I teach. However, I know from talking to some of the upper elementary grade teachers, that this is a much bigger problem for them because the more testing that is required which takes away from instruction time.

Tests in Granite District that First Graders are required to take:

- * DIBELS - 3 times a year, each time takes a full day of regular classroom teaching to administer the test.

- * STAR - A comprehension test that goes along with Accelerated Reader. This is not a required test, however I feel it gives me more information about my student that I use in conjunction with the DIBELS data as I set my guided reading groups. DIBELS information is useful, however I do not feel it is the only way to look at a student's ability to read. I administer this test maybe five times a year. Each time it takes my students about a half hour to take. It is a computer test so the whole class can take it at the same time.

- * ACUITY - District Math Assessment. For first grade there are four tests, each test is given a pretest and a post test. So in total it is administered eight times a year. It takes the class at least a full hour to take each test, sometimes more.

- * ACUITY SCREENER - A mini test used to prepare for the Acuity test as well as give teachers information to see where specific students may be struggling.

Again, this is all for first grade, and it is a much smaller list than even administered in third grade. For first grade, I don't feel it is too much. It can be overwhelming and it does take time to administer the tests, but these tests give me a great deal of information about my students. The only one I haven't seen very useful to me is the Acuity Screener. It is a new test and I know as I learn the program it could be more useful, however, right now I see as the mini test that prepares you to take the big test, and then do classroom tests to prepare for the mini tests.

Rep Mark B. Madsen responded to a comment about how many people do not choose to be teachers because the field of education to some can seem as not challenging enough. He would like to know about our individual higher education and studies.

- * Associate of Science, Snow College

- * Bachelor of Arts, University of Utah

- * Master of Education, University of Utah

- * Gifted and Talented Endorsement, Utah State University through Granite District

Through my college experience I felt that it was very strenuous work. It was not a walk in the park to get my degree, or my teaching license. I loved learning all I could about education, best practices and even theorists. I was lucky to have one of the great cohort leaders, who did everything she could to make outstanding teachers who were prepared to teach when they walked into a school. I have paid for all of my own schooling and did all of it on my own time. We want teachers to have relicensure points, and move lanes for pay raises, but it is not supported. Earning a Master Degree is not cheap, and teachers already get paid much less. With my Master Degree I still earn less than my husband who only has a High School Diploma. I know of professions that will pay for their employees to get more higher education and finish degrees, and I find that sad that we won't do that for one of the most valuable professions there is. We expect our teachers to do it all on their own, to develop as better teachers on their own free time and using their own dime.

Rep. V. Lowry Snow brought up the fact that it had been said that teachers are what makes the difference, so how do we see teacher evaluations? Are they useful?

I have been fine with the teacher evaluations I have received especially with the new program Granite District has started using. I feel teachers are getting better feedback to help us improve our craft. We need constructive criticism, as well as positive comments help better our teaching skills. It was brought up by one of the teachers on the panel that the pass/fail method of evaluations is not effective, and I would agree. The evaluation process is fine, but it is the follow up from those evaluations that need work. If a teacher is given a poor evaluation, what is done that helps the teacher make necessary improvements? Whether it is through evaluations, or through hiring the best of the best, we need to make having the top teachers a priority.

I hope I have answered your questions, and please feel free to email me if you have any follow up questions or need clarification. It was truly a pleasure to come up and share with you and open the conversations. I wish we had had more time to continue the question and answer portion, because I think your questions are valuable and can enlighten you as well as teachers.

Thank you again!

Ms. Kimi Bayles

kbayles@graniteschools.org

Grade 1 teacher, Gearld Wright Elementary School, Granite School District